



November 24, 2004
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BLM PLANS PUBLIC MEETING

The Bureau of Land Management is asking the public to participate in a final review of the bureau's shooting closures environmental assessment (EA). The meeting will be December 8, 2004, at 7 p.m. at the Fish, Wildlife and Parks office at 2300 Lake Elmo Drive.

The EA analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with firearms target shooting on three areas of public land managed by the BLM Billings Field Office. The three areas are the 21-Mile, Shepherd Ah Nei, and Acton Recreation Areas. All three areas are located north of Billings.

In late 2002, Billings Field Manager Sandy Brooks placed an emergency firearms target shooting closure on the three areas. At that time, the areas were used for recreational hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle use, wildlife viewing and hunting, and random target shooting. "Hikers, horseback riders, and other users can plan their activities around hunting seasons, but it's impossible for them to know when and where target shooters are also using the area," Brooks stated. "There have been some recent incidents in which recreationists or adjacent landowners were endangered or injured by target shooting. In order to provide for public safety, it's necessary to temporarily close the areas to target shooting while we find a permanent solution to the problems."

Under the EA's Proposed Action, target shooting would be restricted year-round in all three areas. Hunting would be allowed during seasons established by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MTFWP). A sub-group of the Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council assisted in the development of the EA.

The closure does not include the area commonly used for target shooting know as the 17-Mile area, located on the Crooked Creek Road west of Highway 87 north of Billings.

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